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Pidgins and Creoles. Volume II by John Holm

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of noun phrases. In many languages forms meaning 'also' or 'then' have developed into co-ordinators for clauses. Mithun points out that it is remarkable how many languages have co-ordinating conjunctions with a transparent origin which suggests these conjunctions are relatively new. She suggests, very plausibly, that this sudden growth of co-ordinating conjunctions around the world correlates with exposure to literary languages and notes that explicit co-ordination is useful in writing since intonation is not available as a linking device. 'The sudden grammaticization of coordination in languages all over the world, at times when many of their speakers have been exposed to Indo-European languages with literary traditions, indicates that written language can, in turn, exert an influence on spoken language. Perhaps such influences are first felt in the speech of writers and readers, possibly in marked formal settings. The power of these influences, furthermore, is astonishing. In many of these languages, speakers who now use newly created or borrowed conjunctions are not themselves literate, nor even bilingual in a language with a literary tradition' (356–357).

John Myhill and Junko Hibiya describe 'The discourse function of clause-chaining' in Soddo, a Semitic language of Ethiopia, and Japanese. They deal with non-final verb forms in multiclausal sentences seeking to find correlations with foregrounding and backgrounding. They do not come up with any strong conclusions.

Johanna Nichols' contribution, 'Nominalization and assertion in scientific Russian prose' demonstrates that the Russian verbal noun, which, as we would expect, cannot be used to assert, is systematically used in contexts where the best English translation uses a finite verb to make an assertion (399). The choice of assertion versus non-assertion and the choice of finite versus nominalized verb forms is partly the result of the grammatical categories available in the two languages (400). If it is true that what is to be asserted or presupposed is determined by the code, then it means that the code partly determines the message. 'This means that differences in the Russian and English inventories of grammatical categories give rise not only to differences in the form taken by the message, but also to differences in the content it conveys' (424).

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John Holm, *Pidgins and creoles*. Volume II. *Reference survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Pp. xxv + 445, 11 maps.

This is a very useful book for creolists, linguists engaged in comparative or typological work, and other researchers, including non-linguists, interested

in the languages of a particular region¹. A sequel to Volume I, which dealt with pidgins and creoles from a comparative, theoretical and historical perspective, this volume essentially consists of brief sketches of over a hundred pidgins and creoles. Roughly they average three pages, and contain a socio-historical account of their emergence, an indication of their current sociolinguistic status, a brief outline of some characteristic language features, and a short text, phonemically represented in IPA. The emphasis in this volume, as the author states in the introduction, lies on socio-historical factors. Linguistic information is less abundant, mostly limited to a discussion of specific lexical elements and grammatical morphemes. I will approach the book from two perspectives here: (a) its coverage of individual pidgins and creoles; (b) its contribution to our knowledge of language birth in general. (From now on, I will use the general term 'creole' to refer both to pidgins and creoles, unless I am writing about a particular pidgin. All in all, since its etymological meaning stresses the newness of the languages involved, and since it has few negative connotations, it is the more felicitous term.)

There are seven chapters: five are dedicated to the creoles lexically related to the five principal colonial languages; Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French and English. Two deal with 'varieties based on African languages' and 'varieties based on other languages', respectively. This classification is the traditional one, and corresponds to that in Reinecke's (1975) bibliography. Before going on, let me emphasize the question of classification and organization, since the way that the very complex material of over a hundred languages, spoken all over the world, is structured reveals both the basic perception of the languages involved which is prevalent in modern scholarship, and determines what we can learn from the objects classified. In addition to the – it might be said, colonialist – criterion of lexifier language, employed by Holm, Reinecke, and most other scholars, three other possible classificatory criteria come to mind:

(a) What is traditionally called the SUBSTRATE language, i.e. the language originally spoken by the people who created the creoles: slaves, contract labourers, etc. Thus there could have been chapters on Fon-based, Kikongo-based, Twi-based, Malay-based, creoles, etc. This grouping has obvious advantages in that it would allow us to study the contributions of the substrate languages to the resulting creoles more systematically. Thus it appears that Fon has contributed, lexically at least, to Saramaccan (Smith, 1987; in prep.), to Haitian (Lefebvre, 1986), and to Negerhollands (Sabino, 1988). Grouping these three languages together – instead of, as here, spreading them out over the English, French, and Dutch chapters, respectively – may help us gain a clearer idea of what the possible structural

[1] With thanks to Stefan Elders of Leiden University for comments and bibliographical suggestions.

contributions of Fon may have been. There are several disadvantages as well, however. For many creole languages we do not know the substrate language, or we find a number of different substrata. Moreover, the contribution of substrate languages to the structure of the creole varies enormously. In the case of Berbice Dutch, for instance, Ijo has played a central role, while for other creoles, the contribution of substrate language appears to have been marginal at most.

(b) The AREA that the creoles are spoken in. The classification of the creoles on the basis of the colonial lexifier languages in some cases obscures features of the languages spoken in one area, due to geographical and demographic similarities. Thus comparative areal studies of lexically unrelated creoles are lacking so far. Regions where such studies could fruitfully be carried out – and which would form potential chapters in a reference survey – include the Guyanas, the Lesser Antilles, West Africa and parts of the Pacific. One drawback to organizing the material areally is that many creoles were transported to the regions where they are now spoken from elsewhere. Holm stresses the many trans-Atlantic connections within the British Colonial Empire (412–432). In addition, within one region, sociolinguistic conditions surrounding the emergence of creoles may have varied considerably, a point Holm mentions with respect to Amerindian pidgins (568).

(c) The SOCIOLINGUISTIC CIRCUMSTANCES in which the creole emerged would be a final way of organizing the material. A preliminary typology of plantation creoles, fort creoles, and nautical creoles is established in Bickerton (1987). A further subdivision of the plantation creoles is presented in recent work by the Chaudenson research group. Holm discusses a category of semi-creoles in which colonial whites have played an important role (633). The advantage of an approach in terms of sociolinguistic typology would be obvious: it would allow us to test the hypothesis that circumstances of genesis played a decisive role in the form of the creoles. The main drawback that I can see is that we do not have such a typology at present. Holm's book, containing detailed descriptions of circumstances of genesis, where these are known, could be a useful starting point for such a typology. In addition, it may be that often we are not dealing with discrete sociolinguistic categories, but with continuous scales of demographic constitution of the original colonies, such as, for example, the proportion of slaves to white settlers. Finally, it should be said in defence of the criterion actually used by Holm that taking the colonial lexifier language as the organizing principle also has a sociolinguistic basis, in the sense that institutions and practices developed in one colony were brought over to other colonies of the same European power. These institutions and practices have played an undeniable role in the formation of the creoles.

We can conclude that the classification employed by Holm is as good as the three other possible classifications discussed, at our present state of

knowledge. One could imagine non-linear books, in the perhaps not too distant future, where the information is organized in terms of a data base, and individual readers can take the classificatory criterion most suitable to their interests as a starting principle. At the moment, however, Holm's book will serve very well.

As to the coverage of individual languages, I have few reservations. The author has done his best to summarize everything known about the languages discussed, through library research and correspondence. Particularly welcome are the chapters on creoles based on Portuguese, Dutch and 'other languages', which so far have not been treated together in as much detail, in addition to the chapter with abundant information on English creoles, Holm's own specialism. One can imagine that someone would be tempted to come up with a slightly fuller treatment of the French-based and, particularly, the African-based creoles, at some future point. Excluding pidgin Hausa, as described e.g. in Hodge (1958), while including *Gastarbeiterdeutsch* (618–620) strikes this reviewer as somewhat arbitrary. Every reader will feel inspired to add another variety to Holm's list. I will only mention a reference here to the Slavic-based argot spoken in the concentration camps (Unbegaun, 1947). As further research is done, the author will perhaps feel inclined to write an expanded second edition.

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